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 Jim Burg, Commissioner
 August 21, 2003

SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
 Secretary
 Federal Communications Commission
 145 12th Street S.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20554

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 AUG 28 2003
 FCC - MAIL ROOM

Re: *Ex Parte* Communication s.c. Docket No. 99-273

Dear Ms. Dortch:

As we continue the complex and time-consuming 1996 Telecommunications Act implementation processes related to local and long distance competition, it is not unexpected that other, perhaps peripheral matters receive less attention. Labeling such matters peripheral does not mean they are unimportant, nor does it mean such matters should be ignored or delayed. Directory assistance (DA) is one of those matters

I realize there are a number of would-be DA providers who are prepared to compete and likely compete quite well on matters of pricing and expanded services. In fact, the term "directory assistance" will go the way of the buggy whip as services will range far beyond mere number lookup. It is almost inconceivable given the changes brought about by the internet for information gathering, that we fail to provide the general public with powerful information tools which are easily made accessible through wireline voice communications. We then could couple this result with the price-lowering effects of competition. I have no doubt that we are doing the public a great injustice by not moving forward as quickly as possible to develop DA rules designed to bring a fair and open DA market.

The FCC is well aware of the competitive progress DA has made in Europe once numbering and other market issues were resolved. It is clear that we must discontinue with the monopoly market-derived 411 and 555-1212 numbering advantage if we have any wish for a competitive DA market. Long term benefits in price, reliability, and customer options will occur only when the FCC adopts necessary rules for the retail wireline DA market. I urge your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Jim Burg
 Jim Burg, Commissioner
 South Dakota Public Utilities Commission

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